

1. A distributed communications service system, comprising:

a mobile unit, wherein said mobile unit is configured to transmit identification

5 information indicating a user of the mobile unit;

a network;

a plurality of distributed access points coupled to said network, wherein each of  
said plurality of access points is configured to detect said mobile unit, wherein each of  
said plurality of access points is also configured to receive the identification information  
10 indicating the user of the mobile unit, wherein, after detection of said mobile unit by a  
first access point of said plurality of access points in proximity to said mobile unit, and  
after receipt of the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, one or  
more past transactions of the user of the mobile unit are identified, and said first access  
point transmits information to said mobile unit that is dependent upon the past  
15 transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

2. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the past  
transactions include one or more of requirements, preferences, and habits of the user.

20 3. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the  
past transactions include information extrapolated from the user's past practices which  
indicates probable future actions consistent with the past practices.

25 4. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the  
past transactions include past commercial activities of the user.

5. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the  
plurality of access points are located in an airport.

30 6. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the  
plurality of access points are located in a hotel.

7. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, further comprising:

5 a plurality of information providers coupled to said network, wherein each of said information providers is operable to provide said information through said network and through said first access point to said mobile unit based on the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

10 8. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, further comprising:

one or more information providers connected to said network, wherein a first information provider of said one or more information providers is operable to receive the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, wherein the first information provider is operable to identify the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit and provide said information through said network and through said first access point to said mobile unit, wherein said information is dependent upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

20 9. The distributed communications service system of claim 8, wherein said one or more information providers include one or more of car rental agencies, hotels, restaurants, airline reservation centers, banks, taxi services, and bus and train reservation offices.

25 10. The distributed communications service system of claim 8, further comprising a management information base for storing at least one of a topology of the network, a directory of elements coupled to the network, characteristics of individual ones of said elements, characteristics of connection links, and performance and trend statistics of the network.

11. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein said information is further dependent on a known location of the mobile unit.

12. The distributed communications service system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of access points are arranged at known locations in a geographic region;  
wherein said information is further dependent on a known location of said first access point.

13. A distributed communications service system, comprising:  
a mobile unit, wherein said mobile unit is configured to transmit identification information indicating a user of the mobile unit;  
a network;  
at least one information provider coupled to the network;  
a plurality of access points coupled to said network and distributed in a region,  
wherein each of said plurality of access points is configured to detect said mobile unit, wherein each of said plurality of access points is also configured to receive the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, wherein, after detection of said mobile unit by a first access point of said plurality of access points in proximity to said mobile unit, and after receipt of the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit is transmitted to the at least one information provider;  
wherein the at least one information provider identifies past transactions of the user of the mobile unit, where the at least one information provider provides information through said network and through said first access point to said mobile unit, wherein the at least one information provider provides said information dependent upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

14. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the at least one information provider selects said information to provide to the mobile unit based on the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

15. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the past transactions include one or more of requirements, preferences, and habits of the user.

5 16. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the past transactions include information extrapolated from the user's past practices which indicates probable future actions consistent with the past practices.

10 17. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the past transactions include past commercial activities of the user.

18. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the plurality of access points are located in an airport.

15 19. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein the plurality of access points are located in a hotel.

20 20. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein said information comprises travel itinerary information.

21. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein said information comprises promotions related to goods or services;

wherein said promotions are based upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

25 22. The distributed communications service system of claim 13, wherein said information comprises advertising related to goods or services;

wherein said advertising is based upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

23. A method of using a network access points (APs) to service mobile users who are in a vicinity of the APs, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) detecting the presence of a portable computing device in the vicinity of one of said APs, wherein the portable computing device is carried by a user;

5 (b) providing identification information indicating the user of the portable computing device in response to said detecting;

(c) an information provider transmitting information to the portable computing device through said one of said APs, wherein a content of the information is dependent upon past transactions of the user of the portable computing device.

10 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising:

the information provider selecting said information based upon the past transactions of the user of the portable computing device, wherein said selecting is performed prior to said transmitting.

15 25. The method of claim 23, further comprising:

the information provider accessing past transaction information indicative of the past transactions of the user associated with said identification information, wherein the information provider selects said information based upon said past transaction information.

20 26. The method of claim 23, wherein the past transactions include one or more of requirements, preferences, and habits of the user.

25 27. The method of claim 23, wherein the past transactions include information extrapolated from the user's past practices which indicate probable future actions consistent with the past practices.

30 28. The method of claim 23, wherein the past transactions include past commercial activities of the user.

29. The method of claim 23, wherein the plurality of access points are located in an airport.

30. The method of claim 13, wherein the plurality of access points are located in a hotel.

31. The method of claim 23, further comprising:  
the portable computing device transmitting an inquiry requiring a response to said access point;  
wherein the information provider transmits said information in response to said inquiry.

32. The method of claim 23, further comprising:  
the portable computing device transmitting a message indicating presence of said mobile unit within an area monitored by said one of said APs;  
the information provider determining if a service is required upon detection of said message; and  
the information provider initiating provision of said service in response to the information provider determining that a service is required.

33. The method of claim 23, wherein said information comprises travel itinerary information.

34. The method of claim 23, wherein said information comprises promotion information.

35. The method of claim 23, wherein said information comprises advertising information.

36. A method of providing advertising to users of mobile units, the method comprising:

detecting the presence of a mobile unit in the vicinity of an access point;

determining past transactions of a user of the mobile unit;

transmitting advertising information to the mobile unit in response to said detecting, wherein the advertising information is dependent upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

37. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

selecting said advertising information based upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit prior to said transmitting.

38. A method of providing advertising to users of mobile units, the method comprising:

detecting the presence of a mobile unit in the vicinity of an access point;

providing past transactions of a user of the mobile unit to a provider in response to said detecting;

the provider transmitting advertising information to the mobile unit, wherein the advertising information is dependent upon the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

39. A distributed communications service system, comprising:

a mobile unit, wherein said mobile unit is configured to transmit identification information indicating a user of the mobile unit;

a network;

one or more service providers coupled to the network; and

a plurality of access points coupled to said network and distributed in a region, wherein each of said plurality of access points is configured to detect said mobile unit, wherein, after detection of said mobile unit by a first access point in proximity to said mobile unit, information is transmitted to a first service provider, said information including identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit;

wherein said first service provider is operable to perform a service in response to said information, wherein said service is performed based on the past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

5           40.    The distributed communications service system of claim 39, wherein the first service provider is a rental car agency, wherein, in response to said information, said rental car agency is operable to begin processing a rental car transaction to have a rental car ready for arrival of the user of the mobile unit.

10           41.    The geographic-based communications service system of claim 39, wherein the service provider is a hotel, wherein, in response to said information, said hotel is operable to begin processing a room reservation to have a room ready for the user of the mobile unit.

15           42.    A distributed communications service system, comprising:  
a plurality of access points operable to be coupled to a network and distributed in a region, wherein each of the plurality of access points is configured to detect a mobile unit, wherein each of the plurality of access points is also configured to receive  
20 identification information indicating a user of the mobile unit, wherein, after detection of said mobile unit by a first access point of the plurality of access points in proximity to the mobile unit, and after receipt of the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, the first access point transmits information to the mobile unit, wherein the  
25 information is dependent upon past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

          43.    A distributed communications service system, comprising:  
a plurality of information providers operable to be coupled to a network, wherein  
30 at least one information provider is operable to receive identification information indicating a user of a mobile unit;



wherein the at least one information provider provides information through the network to the mobile unit in response to receiving the identification information indicating the user of the mobile unit, wherein the at least one information provider provides said information dependent upon past transactions of the user of the mobile unit.

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44. The geographic-based communications service system of claim 1, wherein the information is further dependent upon one or more of requirements, preferences, and habits of the user.

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45. The geographic-based communications service system of claim 1, wherein the past transactions include past commercial activities of the user.

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